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ALASKAN AND INSULAR SURVEYS.

Valuable additions to our knowledge of Alaska were made during the last field season by parties from the U. S. Geological Survey and the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. The headwaters of the principal branches of the Yukon were definitely located and the coast-line of the delta at its mouth mapped and examined, with a view to finding a deeper channel than the one now in use for navigation. The party of Mr. W. J. Peters, topographer, and Mr. Alfred Brooks, geologist of the U. S. Geological Survey, whose proposed expedition was noted in Vol. XXXI, page 190, left Pyramid Harbor for the interior the last week in May, and arrived in Eagle City on the 15th of September. The main objects of the expedition, the location of the headwaters of the Copper, Tanana and Nebesna Rivers, were successfully accomplished, and a reconnaissance map of most of the route was completed. A pack train, the first for ten years, was taken through. No especial difficulties were encountered except through stampeding of the animals, caused by irritation from the flies and mosquitoes. The necessity for cutting most of the trails and for encircling inland glaciers delayed progress, so that proposed additional work from Eagle City to Birch Creek and in the Mynook district was abandoned.

A second party, consisting of Mr. F. C. Schrader, geologist, and Mr. Thomas G. Gerdine, topographer, proceeded by way of the White Pass Railroad and steamer on the Yukon to Ft. Yukon. From there an ascent of the tortuous Gens de Large River was made in canoes. From its headwaters a portage was made across to the headwaters of the Koyukuk River, and the river descended to its junction with the Yukon. In exploring this unknown region the party divided, part descending the so-called South Fork and the rest the Middle Fork. The course of these upper branches was found to vary considerably from what was supposed, and an entirely new part of the Gens de Large River was mapped. Topographical and geological reconnaissances of the entire route were completed. At Nulato the party took steamer for St. Michaels and Cape Nome, where Mr. Schrader was joined in geological work by Mr. Brooks. They mapped a strip of the coast six to eight miles wide. The "beach diggings" they found to extend for sixteen or eighteen miles along a shore of granitiferous and black magnetiferous sand, lying between high water and the tundra. The gold is in streaks of very fine grains, especially in the black sand, and is dug by hand and separated in "rockers," with mercury and silver or copper plates. Thirty or forty dollars a day is good work for one man. Underlying the sand is a stratum of clay, through which the diggings have not as yet penetrated. In the whole district over $1,000,000 is estimated to have been taken out during 1899. More than 3,000 men are wintering there at present.

The examination of the Yukon delta, which has been in progress under the Coast and Geodetic Survey, was completed last summer by parties under Capt. J. F. Pratt, Mr. G. R. Putnam and Mr. R. L. Faris. Capt. Pratt conducted soundings in Norton Sound, Bering Sea, about St. Michaels Island and Cape Dyer, and determined the limits of the Yukon shoals. Mr. Putnam and Mr. Faris examined the mouths of the river and the coast-line of the delta. No deeper entrance to the Yukon than the one heretofore in use was discovered, but the coast-line was found to extend from ten to fifteen miles further out than had been supposed. Great difficulty was experienced in mapping the coast on account of the shallowness of the water; miles of mud flat being sometimes exposed by certain combinations of wind and tide. Dr. Edmunds passed around the whole delta from the south mouth to Kothik in a Peterboro canoe, finding it necessary sometimes to drag it through miles of mud or go out of sight of land to obtain sufficient depth of water. Scammon Bay, near Cape Dyer, south of the mouth of the Yukon, was examined as a possible port in lieu of St. Michaels, but the harbor was found to be useless, and the route to the Yukon mouth necessarily out to sea, whereas from St. Michaels craft can hug the shore. A harbor for Cape Nome was likewise sought, and Safety Harbor, between the Cape aud Golofnin Bay, was found to be good for light-draft vessels.

Work on Alaskan fauna was continued by a party sent out by the Biological Survey. It consisted of Mr. W. H. Osgood and Mr. Alfred Maddren, accompanied by Dr. Louis B. Bishop, of New Haven, Conn. The latter part of May this party crossed by the White Pass Railroad to Lake Bennet, whence they proceeded in a small boat through the lakes and down the river to St. Michaels. Collections of small mammals and birds were made along the whole route from Skagway, the work being supplementary to that done on the coast by the Harriman Expedition. The collection of small mammals is the best yet made. The party returned from St. Michaels during the latter part of September.

Examinations of our new island possessions were carried on at a number of points during 1899 under the direction of the Hydrographic Office of the Navy. In Cuba the steamer *Yankton* was engaged in a survey of Santiago de Cuba, and the steamer *Eagle* in one of Guantanamo Bay. In the Hawaiian Islands, Pearl Harbor and Lagoon have been surveyed and charts of the coast prepared from material furnished by the Hawaiian Government. The *Bennington* was engaged in a survey of San Luis de Apra, on the island of Guam in the Mariana group, but has been called away to the Philippines. The steamer *Nero* is now conducting an oceanic survey, including determination of depth, temperature, specific gravity and character of sea bottom in preparation for the laying of a submarine cable from Honolulu to the Philippines and Japan *via* the Midway Islands and Guam. New charts, to the number of 109, have been prepared this year by the Hydrographic Office, relating to the Philippines, to Japan and the East, also to the waters of British Columbia and the islands of the north Pacific.

The steamer *Pathfinder*, of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, was dispatched last July to the Hawaiian Islands *via* Cape Horn and San Francisco. Its work embraces an examination of the sea bottom preparatory to laying cables between the islands. In November the steamer *Blake* was sent to Porto Rico for five months' work in conducting a triangulation of the island.

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